

USDA Foreign Agricultural Service

# GAIN Report

Global Agricultural Information Network

THIS REPORT CONTAINS ASSESSMENTS OF COMMODITY AND TRADE ISSUES MADE BY  
USDA STAFF AND NOT NECESSARILY STATEMENTS OF OFFICIAL U.S. GOVERNMENT  
POLICY

Voluntary    Public

**Date:** 1/10/2014

**GAIN Report Number:** CA14004

## Canada

**Post:** Ottawa

### Profile of the Canadian Farm Population

**Report Categories:**

Agriculture in the News

**Approved By:**

Jeff Zimmerman

**Prepared By:**

Mihai Lupescu

**Report Highlights:**

The Canadian farm population represented 2 percent of the total population of Canada in 2011. The median age of farm operators was 54. The average household size in the farm population was 2.9 persons. The median total income for economic families in the farm population was C\$74,604.

### General Information:

In a [recent report](#), Statistics Canada released the final data from the 2011 Census of Agriculture, providing a socioeconomic profile of Canada's farm population. The report was produced by linking data from the 2011 Census of Agriculture with data from the 2011 National Household Survey and the 2011 Census of Population. This 2011 Agriculture–National Household Survey (Ag-NHS) linkage provides socioeconomic data for Canada's farm population, farm operators and farm families.

This GAIN report includes a summary of the major findings in Statistics Canada's report. Here below are a few statistical notes to help understanding and comparing the data:

- The **farm population** is defined as farm operators as well as individuals in their households.
- An **economic family** is a group of two or more persons who live in the same dwelling and are related to each other.
- A **farm economic family** or **farm family** refers to an economic family where at least one person is a farm operator.
- The **self-employed labor force** refers to persons that were in the labor force and self-employed with or without a business, as well as unpaid family workers that were 15 years or older at the time of the 2011 National Household Survey.
- A **farm operator** is a person involved in the management decisions of a census farm that was aged 15 years or older. Up to three farm operators could be reported per farm.

### Size:

The Canadian farm population totaled 650,395 in 2011, accounting for 2 percent of the total population of Canada. The farm population in Ontario was the highest among the provinces at 174,905, accounting for 1.4 percent of Ontario's total population. At 103,885, the farm population in Saskatchewan made up 10.3 percent of its total population, the largest proportion out of all the provinces.

In Canada, 90 percent of the farm population lives in rural areas, while the remaining lives in urban centers. In total, the rural farm population represented 9.5 percent of the total rural population in Canada. This proportion varied across the country, with the largest proportion in Saskatchewan at 27.8 percent, and the smallest in the Atlantic Provinces at 2.4 percent. Overall, more than 6 million people in Canada live in rural areas, representing 18.8 percent of the total Canadian population.

### Age:

According to the 2011 Ag-NHS, the median age of farm operators was 54. The median age of the total self-employed labor force was 49. The median age of male farm operators was 54, while the median age of female operators was 53. In the total self-employed labor force, the median age of males (50 years) was older than the median age for females (48 years). The median age is the point where exactly one half of the population is older and the other half is younger.

Among the provinces, the lowest median age for farm operators was 52 years in Quebec. In British Columbia, the median age of operators was 56 years, the highest of the provinces.

In general, the farm population was older than the total population. Although those under 35 years old made up the largest portion (38.5 percent) of the farm population, the proportion in the total population was higher (at 43.2 percent). Nearly a third of both the farm population and the total population were between the ages of 35 years and 54 years. Those aged 55 years or older made up a slightly higher percentage of the farm population (31.6 percent) compared to the total population (27.1 percent).

This broader farm population consists of farm operators and the other people in their households. Nearly half of farm operators were aged 55 or older in 2011, while just over 8 percent were under 35 years old. Comparatively, in the total self-employed labor force about one-third were 55 or older and about 15.5 percent were under 35.

The farm populations in British Columbia and the Atlantic provinces had the largest proportion of individuals aged 55 years or older (at 36 percent). The farm populations in Quebec and Ontario, in turn, were largely comprised of younger individuals, with 42 percent of the farm population in Quebec and 41 percent of the farm population in Ontario under the age of 35.

#### **Family:**

In 2011, the average household size in the farm population was 2.9 persons. This compares to an average of 2.5 persons in private households in the total population. The average farm household size ranges across the country from a high of 3.1 in Ontario to a low of 2.7 in Saskatchewan. In the total population, the average household size ranges from a high of 2.6 in Ontario and Alberta to a low of 2.3 in Quebec

#### **Income:**

The median total income for economic families in the farm population was C\$74,604 in 2010. In comparison, the median total income for economic families in the total population was C\$76,458. Farm families represent 2.1 percent of the economic families in Canada. Economic families do not include one-person households, which represented 11.6 percent of all farm households in 2011. The median income is the point where exactly half of the families earn less than this level, while the other half earn more.

The median total income for farm economic families varied across the provinces, ranging from C\$62,641 in Quebec to C\$80,928 in Alberta. In the total population, the median income for all economic families ranged from C\$66,502 in the Atlantic Provinces to C\$93,393 in Alberta.

Poultry and egg production represented 2 percent of farm families in 2011 and had the highest median income in 2010 compared to other types of farming, at C\$90,250. The second highest median income, at C\$82,473, was for the 4 percent of farm families in greenhouse, nursery and floriculture production.

Nearly 30 percent of farm families were involved in the most common type of farming, oilseed and grain farming, which had the third highest median income at C\$80,865. Beef cattle ranching and

farming, including feedlots, accounted for nearly 18 percent of farm families and had a median income of C\$66,873. Almost 2 percent of farm families were engaged in hog farming and had a median income of C\$68,594.

Families involved in dairy cattle and milk production represented 8 percent of farm families and had the lowest median income of \$65,010. This may be due to a number of factors, including that this farm type also had the lowest percentage of operators working off the farm in 2011.

Additional data about the socioeconomic profile of Canada's farm population can be accessed in [these](#) CANSIM tables.

Historical data from the Census of Agriculture allowing for a multi-generational comparison of Canada's farm population can be accessed in [these](#) CANSIM tables.